

Hinged dragon orchid

E n d a n g e r e d F l o r a o f W e s t e r n A u s t r a l i a

If you think you've seen this plant, please call CALM Moora District on (08) 9652 1911, CALM Merredin District on (08) 9041 2488 or CALM Katanning District on (08) 9821 1296.

Commonly known as the hinged dragon orchid, *Caladenia drakeoides* (previously *Drakonorchis drakeoides*) is an inconspicuous plant that grows to 20-30cm high and produces a single (rarely two) small green and maroon flowers between August and October. The species can be recognised by its short, hanging petals and lateral sepals and distinctive hinged labellum (the lip or tongue of the flower).

The species was first collected near Meckering in the 1960s by the late John Tonkinson but wasn't seen again until 1984, when Robert Bates (a visiting South Australia orchidologist) found a small population near Goomalling. The species is now known to have a wide distribution from Coorow to Mt Marshall and southwards to Goomalling with a disjunct population further south at Lake King.

Hinged dragon orchid is confined to the elevated margins of seasonally wet salt lakes, which have variable soils, mainly grey sandy-loams.

Due to the small population sizes and increasing threats from rising salinity and habitat degradation the species was declared as Rare Flora in 1991 and ranked as Critically Endangered in 1995.

CALM has set up Threatened Flora Recovery Teams in the Moora and Merredin Districts to co-ordinate recovery actions addressing the most threatening processes affecting its survival in the wild (See overleaf).

Hinged dragon orchid is currently known from a several, mainly small, populations, many of which are threatened by rising salinity, and CALM is keen to know of any others.

If unable to contact the District offices on the above numbers, please contact CALM's Wildlife Branch on (08) 9334 0422.



Hinged dragon orchid has one or rarely two small flowers with unusual hinged, insect-like lips.
Photo – A. Brown

Recovery of a Species



CALM is committed to ensuring that Critically Endangered taxa do not become extinct in the wild. This is done through the preparation of a Recovery Plan (RP) or Interim Recovery Plan (IRP), which outlines the recovery actions that are required to urgently address those threatening processes most affecting the ongoing survival of threatened taxa in the wild and begin the recovery process.

IRPs are prepared by CALM and implemented by Regional or District Recovery teams consisting of representatives from CALM, Kings Park and Botanic Garden, community groups, private landowners, local Shires and various government organisations.

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Recovery actions that have been implemented, or are progressively being implemented, to protect the species include:

Protection from current threats:

The erection of Rare Flora Markers that mark the site of each population, fencing of populations, control of goats within a nature reserve, rehabilitation of the habitat to reduce the impact on the species from rising salinity and erosion, control of introduced weeds and regular monitoring of the health of each population.

Protection from future threats:

Ensuring that relevant authorities, land owners and CALM personnel are aware of the species' presence and the need to protect it and that all are familiar with the threatening processes identified in the Interim Recovery Plan, the development of a fire protection plan, the collection and storage of seed in CALM's Threatened Flora Seed Centre, the maintenance of live plants away from the wild (ie. in botanical gardens), conducting further surveys, researching the biology and ecology of the species and enhancing plant numbers by the amelioration of a limiting factor, or by direct propagation and translocation techniques.

IRPs will be deemed a success if the number of individuals within populations and/or the number of populations have increased within three years of its approval.



Plants are often found in small clumps. Photo – E. Holland



Hinged dragon orchid is found on elevated margins of seasonally wet salt lakes. Habitat is tall melaleuca and acacia shrublands. Photo – R. Luu